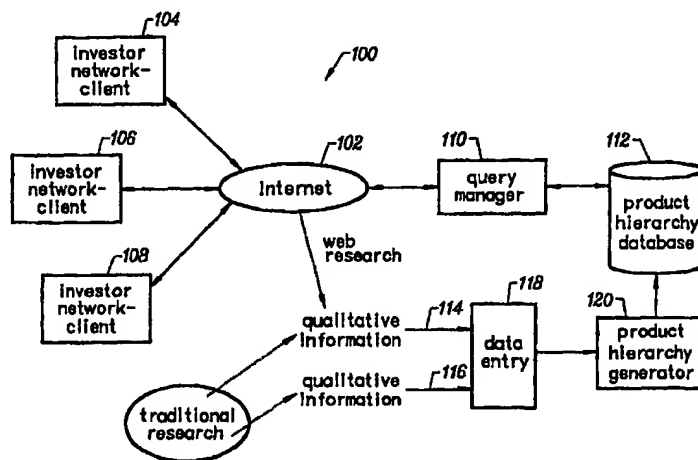




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(54) Title: PRODUCT/SERVICE HIERARCHY DATABASE FOR MARKET COMPETITION AND INVESTMENT ANALYSIS



(57) Abstract

A product hierarchy database organizes company market performance and stock investment information by the products and services produced and offered by each competitor. The companies that produce each product/service are relationally linked to each of their products/services through records. An investment information service includes the product/service hierarchy database and makes it accessible to investor and analyst subscribers through a query system across the Internet. Data entry personnel continually load qualitative and quantitative information about companies and their products/services through a product hierarchy generator connected to the product/service hierarchy database. Subscribers can punch-through to query individual data items, and they can find out what relationships exist between all the important aspects of the companies and the products/services being tracked. The invention also provides for the creation of an index and corresponding index value for every product or service type in the database, which consists of a composite of all companies in a product or service area and whose index value can be measured and compared against any other product or service type index value.

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5 **PRODUCT/SERVICE HIERARCHY DATABASE FOR MARKET COMPETITION AND INVESTMENT ANALYSIS**

10 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

10 **TECHNICAL FIELD**

15 The invention relates to databases used for investment and market analysis. More particularly, the invention relates to investment and market analysis databases with product/service hierarchy structures.

20 **DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART**

20 Qualitative research and common sense can help an investor spot publicly traded companies that are under-valued or over-valued. An under-valued company is generally a good company in which to invest, and conversely an overvalued company is one that should be divested. It has been the present inventors' experience that qualitative information often precedes any
25 quantitative changes that significantly impact a publicly traded company's operating results. Thus, the ability to organize the qualitative information that is publicly available can provide investors with early signals to act before the rest of the investment community does.

30 In the prior art, qualitative research has been a time-intensive, inexact, and all too manual a process. Consequently, many investors do not focus on qualitative issues because there has been no practical tool for analyzing the large volume of available qualitative data. Nor has there been an easy way to organize such data into useful investment information. Such investors therefore
35 act on the quantitative changes that impact a company's operating results, *e.g.* earnings per share. Early information about a company's quantitative changes is often classified as insider information, and is illegal to use in most situations.

40 It is important to provide investors with a way to filter the key qualitative criteria that is essential for accurate comparative valuation and peer-group analysis. What is lacking in the commercial marketplace is a tool for classifying each competitor's product or service, strategic partners, major customers, th ir end-

5 user markets served, any regulatory agencies that affect the business, their particular business strategy, and other such significant data.

10 It would be advantageous to provide a product-hierarchy database that organizes accurate comparable industry, sector, sub-sector, and group market performance and stock investment information centered around the products produced and services performed of each company and their true competitors, with each product or service type created as an index. Such product hierarchy should enable the creation of an index for each product or service type which can be valued and measured.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The invention provides a product-hierarchy database that organizes accurate comparable industry, sector, sub-sector, and group market performance and stock investment information centered around the products produced and services performed of each company and their true competitors, with each product or service type created as an index. Such product hierarchy enables the creation of an index for each product or service type which can be valued and measured.

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A product hierarchy database is provided that organizes and tracks company market performance and stock investment information by the products and services produced and offered by each competitor. The product hierarchy is created in the database independently of the companies. The companies that produce each product are then relationally linked to each product in the hierarchy that corresponds to a product produced or service performed by each company. An investment information service includes the product hierarchy database and makes it accessible to investor and analyst subscribers through a query system across the Internet. Data entry personnel continually load qualitative and quantitative information about companies and their products through a product hierarchy generator connected to the product hierarchy database. Subscribers can punch-through to query individual data items, and they can find out what relationships exist between all the important aspects of the companies and the products being tracked. The invention also provides performance criteria by industry, sector, sub-sector, and group, thereby allowing industry, sector, sub-sector, and group-based qualitative assessment.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a public company analysis system embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating a database structure embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 3 is a block diagram of a product hierarchy methodology of the invention at its top level providing, as an example, the whole of the application specific integrated circuit (ASIC) market;

Fig. 4 is a block diagram that illustrates another product hierarchy according to the invention, showing how the product hierarchy can be used to drill down to increase specificity of the product area or drill up for a broader look at the product market;

Fig. 5 is a block diagram that illustrates still another product hierarchy, beginning with broad product types at top level and scaling down and branching out to very specific products;

Fig. 6 is a block diagram of a database structure that allows the building of a product hierarchy where companies can be related or associated to an appropriate product level through the trademark/brandname of its products; and

Fig. 7 is a report showing relative industry, sector, sub-sector, and group trends according to the invention.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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The invention provides a product-hierarchy database that organizes accurate comparable industry, sector, sub-sector, and group market performance and stock investment information centered around the products produced and services performed of each company and their true competitors, with each product or service type created as an index. Such product hierarchy enables the creation of an index for each product or service type which can be valued and measured.

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Fig. 1 illustrates a public company analysis system embodiment of the invention, and is referred to herein by the general reference numeral 100. The system 100 operates over the Internet 102 and can support the securities investment informational needs of a plurality of investors, represented in Fig. 1 as investor network clients 104, 106, and 108. A query manager 110 appears as a Web page and interfaces the network clients 104, 106, and 108 with a product hierarchy database 112. Qualitative and quantitative information 114 and 116 about public traded companies and their products are input through a data entry system 118 to a product hierarchy generator 120. The qualitative and quantitative information 114 and 116 can come from Web-based research or traditional research based on documents and publications. The product hierarchy generator 120 builds a relational database in the database 112 that is structured by product.

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Such database 112 is useful in the analysis of competing companies and their markets through the use of database relationships that are based on product hierarchies. Users are able to conduct comprehensive comparative valuation analysis by industry, sector, sub-sector, and group product. Users can also obtain hierarchical industry, sector, sub-sector, and group profiles. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data queries can be supported. Database 112 preferably allows investors to conduct queries by searching on individual or multiple qualitative and quantitative categories. Database 112 preferably allows investors to conduct qualitative analysis of quantitative data and quantitative analysis of qualitative data. Database 112 can be used in securities analysis of publicly traded companies and to increase partnership investment performance.

An investment research database 112 provides qualitative and quantitative data for publicly traded companies in a single source accessible via the Internet.

5 Database 112 supports industry, sector, sub-sector, and group hierarchical classifications based on specific products or services. Queries through the Internet 102 allow users to see how specific companies are positioned by group within a particular industry, sector, sub-sector, as well as relative industry, sector, sub-sector, and group by industry, sector, sub-sector, and group performance.

10 The proper creation of industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups, and the proper classification of companies are essential for accurate comparative valuation and peer group analysis. The product hierarchy generator 120 categorizes all companies into appropriate industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups, and product areas according to a hierarchy within their respective industries. In this way, investor users can get accurate peer group analysis, relative valuation comparisons, and qualitative queries within a chosen industry, sector, sub-sector, or group. The hierarchy is built based on products produced or services performed within industries, which is a bottoms-up approach to company classification.

20 Fig. 2 illustrates a database structure embodiment of the invention, and is referred to herein by the general reference numeral 200. The database structure 200 is equivalent to the database 112 (Fig. 1) and comprises a quantitative module 202, a qualitative module 204, a product hierarchy 206, a pricing module 208, and a user registration module 210. The quantitative module 202 includes one or more quantitative information records 212 that preferably have substantially all the data entry fields listed in Table I. Specialized applications may achieve good results using subsets of the information fields listed in Table I.

TABLE I (Quantitative Information)

CO_ID(FK)		
RECORD_TYPE		
RECORD_NO		
year	quarter	derived_data_processed_flag
industr_code	repno	cusip
ticker	coname	split_date
split_factor	currency_code	currency_rate
fplen	fplenscf	fptyp
fpbegdt	fpenddt	updstat
updstatbs	updstatcf	restdtis
restdtbs	restdtcf	fisperiod
revenue	interest_income_bank	premiums_earned
net_investment_income	realized_gains_losses	other_revenue
total_revenue	cost_of_revenue	losses_benefits_adjustments
amortization_of_policy_costs	fuel_expense	direct_operating_expenses
selling_general_admin_expenses	depreciation_and_amortization	research_and_development
interest_expense	other_operating_expenses	unusual_income_expenses
interest_expense_bank	loan_loss_provision	total_expenses
interest_income_non_operating	interest_expense_non_operating	interest_net_non_operating
afudc	non_interest_income	non_interest_expense
gain_loss_on_sale_of_assets	other_net	income_before_taxes
income_taxes	income_after_taxes	minority_interest_is
equity_interests_is	preferred_dividends	general_partner_distribution
us_gaap_adjustment	misc_earnings_adjustment	interest_adjust_primary_eps
adj_inc_avail_to_cmn_prim_eps	primary_eps_excl_xord_items	discontinues_operations
extraordinary_items	accounting_change	primary_ips_include_xord_items
dividends_per_common_share	primary_average_shares_outstnd	full_dilution_adjustment
fully_diluted_shares_outstnd	fd_eps_excl_xord_items	fd_eps_include_xord_items
cash_and_equivalents	cash_and_due_bank	other_short_term_investments
investments	loans	loan_loss_reserves
other_interest_earning_assets	accounts_receivable	inventory
prepayments_and_advances	deferred_policy_acqsn_costs	other_current_assets
total_current_assets	long_term_investments	utility_plant
utility_plant_depreciation	utility_plant_net	property_plant_equipment
accum_depreciation_and_amort	property_plant_equipment_net	goodwill_intangibles
deferred_charges	other_assets	other_long_term_assets
total_assets	accounts_payable	short_term_debt
deposits	other_interest_bearing_liab	policy_liabilities
curr_port_ltd_cap_lease_oblig	other_current_liabilities	other_liabilities
total_current_liabilities	long_term_debt	capitalized_lease_obligations
total_long_term_debt	minority_interest_bs	deferred_taxes

other_long_term_liabilities	total liabilities	redeemable_preferred
preferred_stock	common_stock	additional_paid_in_capital
retained_earnings	treasury_stock	other_equity
esop_debt_guarantee	total_shareholder_equity	shares_outstanding_period_end
net_income_scf	depreciation_scf	amortization_scf
deferred_taxes_indirect	other_non_cash_items	cash_receipts
cash_payments	cash_taxes_paid	cash_interest_paid
other_operating_cash_flows	total_cash_from_operating_act	capital_expenditures
other_investing_cash_flows	total_cash_from_investing_act	dividends_paid
purchase_or_sale_of_stock	purchase_and_retirement_debt	other_financing_cash_flows
total_cash_from_financing_act	exchange_rate_effects	net_change_in_cash
cash-interest_paid_indirect	cash_taxes_paid_indirect	depreciation_amortization_scf
dividend_growth_5yr	revenue_growth_5yr	earnings_per_share_growth_5yr
revenue_per_employee	no_of_employees	avg_square_feet_space
sv_gross_profit	sv_gross_margin	sv_selling_gen_admin_percent
sv_research_anddev_prct	sv_total_expenses	sv_oprtng_income
sv_oprtng_margin	sv_income_before_tax_mrgn	sv_tax_rate
sv_net_income_mrgn	sv_long_term_debt_to_capital	sv_long_term_debt_to_equity
sv_total_debt_to_equity	sv_working_capital	sv_curr_ratio
sv_quick_ratio	sv_oprtng_cash_flow_last_yr	sv_roe_trailing_4_quarters
sv_roe_last_5_fiscal_years	sv_roe_last_quarter	sv_roa_trailing_4_quarters
sv_roa_last_5_fiscal_years	sv_roa_last_quarter	sv_total_capital
sv_total_debt	sv_roic_trailing_4_quarters	sv_roic_last_5_fiscal_years
sv_roic_last_quarter	sv_cash_per_share	sv_dso_last_quarter
sv_dso_last_5_fiscal_years	sv_inventory_turnover_lst_qtr	sv_inventory_turnover_lst_yr
sv_oprtng_income_to_assets_tr	sv_book_value_per_share	sv_oprtng_cash_flow_trailing
sv_oprtng_cash_flow_share_tr	sv_oprtng_cash_flow_share_lfy	sv_pct_chng_gross_mrgn_seq
sv_pct_chng_gross_mrgn_yoy	sv_pct_chng_oprtng_mrgn_seq	sv_pct_chng_oprtng_mrgn_yoy
sv_pct_chng_income_mrgn_seq	sv_pct_chng_income_mrgn_yoy	sv_sales_per_share_trailing
sv_sales_per_share_lst_5_yr	sv_asset_turnover_trailing	sv_asset_turnover
sv_interest_coverage_lst_qtr	sv_interest_coverage_lst_5_yr	sv_revenue_growth_seq
sv_revenue_growth_yoy	sv_revenue_growth_l_year	sv_earn_per_share_growth_yoy
sv_earn_per_share_growth_seq	sv_earn_per_share_growth_l_yr	sv_l_yr_forward_eps_growth_rt
sv_market_capitalization	sv_current_price_to_earnings	sv_historical_pe_ratio
sv_forward_pe_ratio	sv_price_to_book_value	sv_price_to_sales_trailing
sv_price_to_sales_5fy	sv_price_to_oprtng_cash_flow	sv_price_to_free_cash_flow
sv_current_pe_ratio_to_growth	sv_forward_pe_ratio_to_growth	sv_free_cf_per_share_tr
sv_free_cf_per_share_lfy	sv_price_to_free_cf_tr	sv_avg_gross_ppe_per_employee
sv_avg_gross_ppe_per_sqft	sv_debt_to_mkt_cap	sv_pct_chng_gross_mrgn_fy
sv_pct_chng_oprtng_mrgn_fy	sv_pct_chng_income_mrgn_fy	

The data entry system 118 (Fig. 1) is used to load quantitative information 116 (Fig. 1) about particular companies in each field listed in Table I. The abbreviations and acronyms listed here are merely examples, and it will be obvious to most readers what these fields each represent. Typically, the balance sheet, income, and cash flow statement line items from the company's quarterly announcements are included in the data. From this, it is possible to use spreadsheet programs to compute various key operating ratios important to the investment community. Other information structures can also be used in alternative embodiments of the invention.

The qualitative module 204 includes one or more company records 214. Each such company record 214 preferably includes the data fields listed in Table II. There is a relational database linkage between the quantitative information records 212 and the company records 214.

TABLE II (Company Record)

ID		
name		
type_code	address_line_1	address_line_2
address_city	address_state (fk)	address_zip
address_country(fk)	phone_number	phone_fax_number
investor_contact_first_name	investor_contact_last_name	ictitle_ID(fk)
auditors_opinion	management_background	legal_proceedings_flag
legal_proceedings_notes	number_of_employees	web_site_address
email_address	minority_stub	minority_stub_percent
analysts_number	description	web_update_user_id
web_update_password	us_business_by_country (fk)	us_business_percentage
other_business_in_us	other_business_percentage	notes
scffmtcode	business_strategy_text	last_quant_q_rec
last_quant_y_rec		

Each company record 214 is associated within the qualitative module 204 with a country record 216, a us_postal_states record 218, an investor_contact_title record 220, a company_geographic_activities record 222 that includes a geographic_area record 224 and an activity_type record 226, a company_associations record 228 that includes an association_contact_type record 230 and a company_association_type record 232, a company_markets record 234 with an end_user_market record 236, a company_regulatories_agency record 238 with a regulatory_agency record 240, a company_stock_exchanges record 242 with a stock_exchange record

- 5 244, a company_management record 246 with a management_title record 248, a company_business_strategies record 250, and a business_strategy_type record 252. All records 216-252 have relational database linkages to the company record 214.
- 10 The country record 216 preferably includes a name field and a note field. The us_postal_states record 218 preferably includes a postal code field and a name field. The investor_contact_title record 220 preferably includes an identity (ID) field, a name field and a notes field. The company_geographic_activities record 222 preferably includes company
- 15 identity (co_ID), activity_ID, geographical area (geoarea_ID), percent of business (percent), and notes fields. The geographic_area record 224 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. The activity_type record 226 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. The company_associations record 228 preferably includes identity (ID), contact
- 20 name, investment percentage, company ID for and to, coassntty_ID, and conty_ID fields. The association_contact_type record 230 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. The company_association_type record 232 preferably includes name, and notes fields. The company_markets record 234 preferably includes company identity (co_ID), name, and object_ID
- 25 fields. The end_user_market record 236 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. The company_regulatories_agency record 238 preferably includes company identity (co_ID) and object ID fields. The regulatory_agency record 240 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. The company_stock_exchanges record 242 preferably includes
- 30 company identity (co_ID) and object ID fields. The stock_exchange record 244 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. The company_management record 246 preferably includes company identity (co_ID), order number, title ID, manager name, manager compensation, and notes fields. The management_title record 248 preferably includes identity
- 35 (ID), name, and notes fields. The company_business_strategies record 250 preferably includes company identity (co_ID) and object ID fields. The business_strategy_type record 252 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields.
- 40 The product hierarchy 206 has several records in a strict hierarchy that is built according to several critical rules. Such rules are described in detail below in connection with Figs. 3-6. A company_products record 260 preferably includes fields for company ID, object ID, tradename, product-type ID,

5 regulatory-agency stage ID, clinical stage ID, side effects, indications, identity (ID), and notes for every product or service that a particular company offers. A stage_of_development record 262 preferably includes identity (ID), product-type ID, name, and notes fields for every product or service that is recorded in the company_products record 260. A product_type record 264 includes
10 identity (ID), name, and notes field for every product or service that is recorded in the company_products record 260. A product record 266 includes independent fields for its own identity (ID), its parent's identity in the product hierarchy, the product name, the total available market, the trend identity (trend_ID), and notes. Product_life_cycle, product_growth_trend, and
15 product_trend records 268 include identity (ID), name, and notes fields.

A revenue/end user market function 290 contains a revenue table that includes a percentage figure, and contains an end user market table that includes a list of available end user markets. The revenue table and end user market table are
20 linked to the company record 214 and the product hierarchy 266. It is important to note that the revenue/end user market function may be linked to any level of the product hierarchy. This allows user selection of a most appropriate level in the product hierarchy to identify revenues and end user markets.

25 The product record 266 is unique in that it allows the construction of a hierarchy through the use of its parent identity field.

The pricing module 208 also comprises several records. A company_securities record 270 preferably includes identity (ID), company
30 identity (co_ID), security type ID, CUSIP number, and ticker symbol fields. A security_type record 272 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. A security_splits_history record 274 preferably includes company security identity (COSEC_ID), split date, and split factor fields. A security_prices_buffer record 276 preferably includes company security
35 identity (COSEC_ID), stock symbol type, cusip number, ticker, last price, time of last price, 52-week high, 52-week low, earnings estimates, and price-changed-flag fields. A security_prices_intraday record 278 preferably includes identity (ID), name, and notes fields. A security_prices_history record 280 preferably includes price date, company security identity (COSEC_ID), last price, time of last price, 52-week high, 52-week low, earnings estimates, and price-changed-flag fields.
40

5 The user registration module 210 includes a subscriber (SV_user) record 282 and a user_type record 284. The SV_user record 282 preferably includes user type ID, nickname, password, user name, phone, and e-mail fields. The user_type record 284 preferably includes fields for name and notes. The user registration module 210 is used to enroll and validate investor network-clients
10 104, 106, and 108 (Fig. 1) when they log-on to the query manager 110 over the internet 102.

15 In operation, a query can be constructed by query manager 110 (Fig. 1) to find all relations to a particular field content in a particular record. For example, the company_regulatories_agencies record 238 can be used to list all companies in the database 200 that share the same regulatory agencies.

20 The product hierarchy 206 (Fig. 2) includes a company_products record 260 with links to a stage_of_development record 262 and a product_type record 264. Each company_products record 260 is linked to one or more records 266 for each product, and each product_life_cycle, product_growth_trend, and product_trend record 268 is linked to one or more records 266 for each product.

25 The product hierarchy 206 includes all the products of all the companies in the database 200 in as many product records 266 as are necessary. The product hierarchy 206 can span all industry, sector, sub-sector, and groups and is based solely on the products or services that are produced by each competing company.

30 Fundamentally, each new product hierarchy chain is created in the database 200 according only to a product manufactured or a service performed, and must be completely independent of any other factor. A hierarchical breakdown within any industry, sector, sub-sector, or group is independent of the constituent companies themselves. Only their individual products and services matter.
35 Accordingly, all such companies are associated at a particular product level based upon products manufactured or services performed and not dependent on a company's self-described business description.

40 Each such hierarchy begins at its top with broad product types, and scales down and branches out to very specific products. Any relationships that exist between product levels is preferably handled in a record, e.g. by assigning a parent identity and level number to each product. An unlimited number of

5 product levels can be created in an industry, sector, sub-sector, or group within a product hierarchy.

10 When a new product level in a hierarchy is created, it is attached as a subset of a previous level or category and is related by association. Every other lower and subsequent product level is associated, linked, or related to some other higher level in the chain of the product hierarchy 206, except at the highest level.

15 Two separate products, represented in two product records 266 on the same level, may be attached or related to a single parent or higher level in the product hierarchy 206. Constructed this way, the two products can be related to one another. However, two products at the same level with the same parent are never directly linked or made dependent on the other. A product level can have an unlimited number of sub-product levels attached below it.

20 Consider Fig. 3. A product hierarchy 300 represents at its top level 302 the whole of the application specific integrated circuit (ASIC) market. The components of the ASIC market include, at lower levels, the programmable logic devices (PLD's) level 304, a gate array level 306, and a standard cell level 308. Individual gate array products attached to gate array level 306 are produced by well-known companies: NEC, Toshiba, Texas Instruments, LSI Logic, and VLSI Systems. Individual standard cell products attached to standard cell level 308 are produced by LU, Toshiba, LSI Logic, and IBM. Lower levels are needed in the PLD industry, sector, sub-sector, and group, so a field programmable gate array (FPGA) level 310, a bipolar PLD level 312, and an erasable PLD level 314 are needed in the product hierarchy 300. The FPGA industry, sector, sub-sector, and group is further divided into a transistor FPGA level 316 and an antifuse FPGA level 318. These two product areas include products from Xilinx, Altera, and LU, and also Actel, Quicklogic, and Cypress Logic, respectively. The erasable PLD level 314 is split into complex PLD level 320 and a simple PLD level 322.

40 Fig. 4 illustrates a product hierarchy 400 in a further example. A semiconductor level 402 includes an integrated circuits (IC) level 404 and a discrete devices level 406. The IC level 404 is divided into a digital IC level 408 and an analog IC level 410. The discrete devices level 406 has as its constituents, a diodes level 412, a rectifiers level 414, a transistors level 416, and an opto-electronics level 418. The digital level 408 is split between a metal-oxide semiconductor

(MOS) level 420 and a digital bipolar level 422. The MOS level 420 has beneath it a memory level 424, a microcircuit level 426, and a logic level 428. The top of the ASIC level 302 (Fig. 3) could be attached to the logic level 428 (Fig. 4) in this example. The memory level 424 is further divided into a volatile memory level 430 and a non-volatile memory level 432.

There is an important difference between the product hierarchy 206 and individual companies. The product hierarchy is created independent of companies. Products that make up the product hierarchy are called product levels. Individual company products are referred to as company products and are specific to the company itself. There are several data items that are also tied to the individual company specific products and include brandname or tradename, revenue percentage, and end-user markets.

Fig. 5 represents a generalized product hierarchy 500. The product hierarchy begins with broad product types at top level "A" 502, and scales down through levels 504-518 and branches out to very specific products. Companies can only be directly linked to the lowest level in the hierarchy, but are then identified with higher levels because the parent levels in the hierarchy are directly linked to the lower levels. The relationships that exist between product levels is preferably memorialized in one lookup record using a method of assigning a parent identity and level number to each product. An unlimited number of product levels 502-518 can be created in an industry, sector, sub-sector, and group within the product hierarchy 500. When a new product level in the product hierarchy 500 is created, it then becomes a subset of the previous level/category and is related by association. With the exception of the highest level, every other lower and subsequent product level is associated/linked/related to some other higher level in the chain of the product hierarchy.

Referring to Fig. 5, a company cannot be attached to product level "D" 508 because a lower product level "G" 514 exists. A company may be attached to product level "G" 514 because it is a bottom level. Companies and other company product specific qualitative aspects can be attached to product level "I" 518, for example. Thus, product level "H" 516 could have attached to it, product 1 of company 1 or product 1 of company 2 with tradename/brandname 1.

5 A company, and thus the brandname or tradenames of its products, can only
be attached, or associated at the lowest, node level of the product hierarchy.
Any company may have multiple products with multiple brandname or
tradenames assigned to the same level in the product hierarchy 206 of a
10 particular industry, sector, sub-sector, or group. In addition, a company and its
product's brandname or tradename may be attached at an unlimited number of
lowest product levels in the product hierarchy, and across different industries,
sectors, sub-sectors, and groups. An unlimited number of companies and thus
products, brandnames or tradenames can be attached, associated to one
15 lowest level in the product hierarchy 206. A company with multiple products
can exist at multiple product levels, and in multiple product hierarchies in
multiple and different industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups.

Once a product level has been created, there cannot be a link between it and a
company at a higher level. A company and its product brandname or
20 tradename can only be linked at the lowest node of the product hierarchy 206.
In other words, a particular product record 266 that is named as a parent to
another product record 266 cannot be attached to a company_products record
260. Companies can be associated to higher levels by default due to the
associations that are³ created by the product hierarchy 206 itself through the
25 parent relationships that the hierarchy uses.

In Fig. 6, a database structure 600 uses a product name record 602, a
company-product name or trademark/brandname record 604, and a company
name record 606. Each record can then be freely associated with each other
30 record and its individual records.

Referring once again to Fig. 2, when a node level in the product hierarchy 206 is
created, there are two methods for inputting data that are mutually exclusive. In
a first method, a company which has a product and a corresponding brandname
35 or tradename can be attached to a lowest product level. This action thereafter
defines that product level as the lowest level in the chain. In a second method,
another product level is attached by creating a new level in the product
hierarchy 206. Once a company and its product has been assigned to a
hierarchy level, it becomes associated at every higher level in the product
40 hierarchy for that particular chain of connection by default. As a result,
companies can be associated with the highest to the lowest hierarchy levels.

5 Database 200 hierarchically categorizes companies in company records 214
into appropriate industries, sub-industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups
based solely upon their respective product or services. The product hierarchy
206 therefore is the only mechanism that defines how a company is to be
10 categorized within an industry, sector, sub-sector, or group. This is a critical way
in which the invention is distinguished over the prior art.

The result of this product hierarchy 206 and companies being attached at the
lowest level is that proper industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups are
created. The highest level in the product hierarchy would define the broadest
15 industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups, with the greatest number of
companies making up that industry, sector, sub-sector, or group. As one
scales down the product hierarchy, industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups
are narrowed, becoming more refined and specific, eventually getting down to
the lowest levels with fewer companies. These industries, sectors, sub-
20 sectors, and groups can then be looked at to track performance, relative to other
industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and groups or individually on any quantitative
and certain qualitative parameters. By definition, industries, sectors, sub-
sectors, and groups are created at every product level in the product hierarchy.
The central point is that any of these industries, sectors, sub-sectors, and
25 groups can be evaluated on any quantitative and certain qualitative parameters.

Therefore, system 100 (Fig. 1) provides the ability to display systematically,
search, and compare all companies and peer groups, based upon products
manufactured or services performed anywhere within an industry, sector, sub-
30 sector, and group, as well as perform industry, sector, sub-sector, and group
by industry, sector, sub-sector, and group comparisons.

Another critical aspect of the invention is that all of the qualitative data 114 (Fig.
1) that is related to a company is selectively parsed and placed into separate
35 fields for each item, e.g. Tables I-II. Such fields are given specific database
linkages that allow the data to be associated or linked to other data. This
provides the database 200 with enough flexibility to perform data mining and
to drill down for specific information. Searches can be performed on any data
element in database 200.

40 Information about an individual company's products or services, by brandname
or tradename, is loaded in a separate record. It will be appreciated that the
terms "products" and "services" are used interchangeably herein. Each

5 company's products record 266 is linked or related to its general company
information record 214. Each company that produces a product in a product
hierarchy 206 is associated to that product's level in the product hierarchy
through a company products record 260. If a company does not have a
10 tradename or brandname for its product, and the data entry field is therefore left
blank at the data entry stage 118 (Fig. 1), an identifier (ID) is nevertheless
automatically assigned so such company can still be linked or associated to a
product level in a corresponding hierarchy. Redundant product tradenames
may be attached at many, bottom node levels in the product hierarchy. A
15 company can have one of its products attached at multiple, lowest product
levels in the product hierarchy. A company may have an unlimited number of
products.

Product records can be specialized for particular industries, sectors, sub-sectors,
and groups. For example, the company product record for medical device and
20 bio-pharmaceutical companies preferably includes information fields for each
product's clinical and regulatory stage, side effects, and prescription indications.

An individual company can be related to some other company or entity for any
number of reasons. A two-way database association is implemented by
25 linking two separate records to the general company record 214 through a
many-to-many relationship. The two record links are the association and is
represented by the double lines between company record 214 and company
associations record 228 in Fig. 2. The company association type record 232
identifies why the two entities are related, and/or otherwise explains the basis
30 for the association. Association types can include customers, strategic partners,
corporate and venture shareholders, equipment suppliers, and component
suppliers. An unlimited number of association types can be created. Such
structure allows a user to search by a particular association type. For example,
list all of the customers for company A or list all the companies that have
35 company A as a customer. In another example, if company A has company B
as a customer, then from company B's perspective company A could be either
a component or equipment supplier.

The geographic dispersion of revenues and manufacturing can be recorded for
40 each individual company. Preferably, the database structure for this is
processed in three separate records 222, 224, and 226. These are related to
each other and are related as a group to the general company record 214. The
same geographic areas can be related to any number of otherwise

5 independent companies. This allows searches to be done based on the type of activity, sales or manufacturing, as well as the geographic area, to produce any and all companies that meet the criteria.

10 Revenue percentage figures can be attached to every one of a company's products. A data field is included to store the percentage of revenue a company generates for each product. Such revenue percentage value can be attached at any level in a product hierarchy, lowest to highest for a particular company for its products. Therefore, if a figure has been entered at a higher level in the product hierarchy, it may represent the percentage of revenue
15 generated for more than one company product. If such company has multiple products associated at lower levels in the product hierarchy, the sum of the figures entered for a company may not exceed one hundred percent. A search by query manager 110 is satisfied if a figure is entered at a lower level in the product hierarchy and the user nevertheless sets a parameter based on a
20 higher level in the chain.

End-user market records 236 are attached to each company market record 234 and company record 214 for each one of the company's products. An association is made to both the company's products as well as the product
25 hierarchy 206. Such information can be attached at any level in the product hierarchy for a company. Multiple end-user markets can be associated to one product level for a company. A list of the end-user markets is loaded in what is called a reference, or code record where consistency can be maintained much more effectively and eliminate duplicate entries that may be spelled slightly
30 differently. When assigning an end-user market, one must be selected from the available list in the code record. The code record can be unlimited in the number of end-user markets entered. The same end-user market can be attached or associated to many products

35 Regulatory agencies that affect a company are identified. Such information is loaded in a separate record which is then related to the company regulated. One regulatory agency can be associated to an unlimited number of companies. Each company can have an unlimited number of agencies related to it. This allows for searching by a particular agency resulting in any and all
40 companies that are affected by that agency.

Information regarding each company's management team and directors is loaded in a single record structure, which is then related to the company record.

5

Each company in database 200 has certain generic business strategies associated to it. These strategies are loaded in a separate record. One company can have multiple strategies associated to it. Each strategy can have an unlimited number of companies related. This allows searches on a particular strategy to result in all the companies that have been identified as having that strategy.

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Product market trend can be associated to any and every product in the product hierarchy, product level dependent but company independent (see Fig. 7). The trends are loaded in a reference record. When associating a trend to a product, one must be selected from the reference record. One product can contain multiple trends. One trend can be attached to multiple products. A total-available-market figure can be attached or associated to each product throughout the product hierarchy. When a new product level name is created in the product hierarchy a separate field exists to enter the total-available-market figure for that product.

20

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Although the invention is described herein with reference to the preferred embodiment, one skilled in the art will readily appreciate that other applications may be substituted for those set forth herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. Accordingly, the invention should only be limited by the Claims included below.

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CLAIMS

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1. A system, comprising:

a database management module providing for the storage and organization of information related to particular commercial companies and products/services;

a plurality of product/service records in said database management module each having a product/service description field and a parent product/service identification field that links all such product/service records together in a product/service hierarchy;

a plurality of company product/service records in said database management module, each having a company product/service description field for linking each said particular commercial company to its corresponding product/service hierarchy records; and

a plurality of company records in said database management module having a company description field for linking each said commercial company to its corresponding product/service records.

2. The system of Claim 1, further comprising:

a query module for displaying systematically, searching, and comparing all said commercial companies and any peer groups, based upon products manufactured or services performed anywhere within an industry, sector, sub-sector, or group as defined by said hierarchy.

3. The system of Claim 1, further comprising:

means for creation of an index and corresponding index value for every product or service type in said database which consists of a composite of all companies in that product or service area and whose index value can be measured and compared against any other product or service type index value.

4. The system of Claim 1, wherein:

said information related to particular commercial companies and products/services is selectively parsed and placed upon input to said database management module into separate data fields for each item.

5 5. The system of Claim 1, wherein:

 said database management module loads information about an individual company's products/services by brandname or tradename in a separate record, each company's product/service record is linked or related to its general company information record, and each company that produces a
10 product or provides a service in a product/service hierarchy is associated to that product's/service's level in the product/service hierarchy through a company product/service record; and

 if a company does not have a tradename or brandname for its product/service, a data entry field is therefore left blank at a data entry stage
15 and an identifier (ID) is nevertheless automatically assigned so such company can still be linked or associated to a product/service level in a corresponding product/service hierarchy.

20 6. The system of Claim 5, wherein:

 any redundant product/service records may be attached at many, bottom node levels in the product/service hierarchy, and a company can have one of its products/services attached at multiple, lowest product/service levels in the product/service hierarchy, and each said commercial company may have an unrestricted number of product/service records.

25 7. The system of Claim 6, wherein:

 said product/service records and hierarchy formation are specialized for particular industries, sectors, sub-sectors, or groups with data entry fields generic to a particular commercial industry.

30 8. The system of Claim 1, wherein:

 said database management module relates an individual company to some other company or entity for any number of reasons, and a two-way database association is implemented by linking two separate records to the
35 general company record through a many-to-many relationship.

40 9. The system of Claim 1, wherein:

 said database management module records any geographic dispersion of revenues and manufacturing for each individual company.

40

5 10. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management module attaches any revenue-percentage
 figures to every one of said commercial company's products/services, and a
 data field is included to store such percentage of revenue a company
 generates for each product/service at any hierarchy level.

10

11. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management module attaches an end-user market record
 to a company market record and a company record for each one of said
 commercial company's products/services at any hierarchy level.

15

12. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management module makes end user markets and/or
 revenues an association to both said commercial company's products/services
 as well as to said product hierarchy, and such information can be attached at any
20 level in said product/service hierarchy for a company.

20

13. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management associates multiple end-user markets to
 one product level for a company, and a list of any end-user markets is loaded in
25 to a reference or code record where consistency can be maintained and
 duplicate entries that may be spelled slightly differently can be eliminated.

25

14. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management module identifies any regulatory agencies
30 that affect a company in a regulatory-agency record, such that any one
 regulatory agency can be associated to an unlimited number of said commercial
 companies, and each said commercial company can have an unlimited number
 of agencies related to it.

30

35 15. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management module loads any information regarding
 each said commercial company's management team and directors in a single-
 record structure, which is then related to said company record.

35

5 16. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management module associates each said commercial
 company with certain generic business strategies and such strategies are
 loaded in a separate record.

10 17. The system of Claim 1, wherein:
 said database management module associates a product/service market
 trend to any and every said product/service record in said product/service
 hierarchy, and said product/service market trend is loaded in a reference record,
 and such that when associating a trend to a product/service, said
15 product/service must be selected from said reference record.

 18. A database system, comprising:
 a quantitative information module into which facts about a plurality of
 particular companies are loaded and can be accessed;
20 a qualitative module with a company database record having a relational
 database linkage and access to the quantitative information module, and further
 comprising database records for individual ones of said particular companies
 that includes location, market, stock exchange, company management, and
 company business strategy information records each with independent
25 relational database linkages to said company database record; and
 a product/service hierarchy with a company products/services database
 record having a relational database linkage and access to said company
 database record, and further comprising a product/service record with a field that
 describes a parent product/service record.

30 19. The database system of Claim 18, wherein:
 said product/service hierarchy further comprises a stage-of-
 development record with a relational-database linkage to said company
 product/service record.

35 20. The database system of Claim 18, further comprising:
 a pricing module having a company securities record with a relational
 database linkage and access to said company database record, and further
 comprising database records for individual ones of said particular companies
40 that includes security types, splits, and prices records with a relational databas
 linkage to said company securities record.

5

21. The database system of Claim 18, further comprising:
a subscriber registration module providing for an enrollment and a verification of investor network-clients over an Internet connection that thereafter engage in a query of the qualitative module.

10

22. The database system of Claim 18, wherein:

15

said product/service hierarchy loading information about an individual company's products/services, by brandname or tradename in a separate record, each company's product/service record is linked or related to a general company information record, and each company that produces a product or provides a service in a product/service hierarchy is associated to that product's/service's level in the product/service hierarchy through a company product/service record; and

20

if a company does not have a tradename or brandname for its product/service, a data entry field is therefore left blank at a data entry stage and an identifier (ID) is nevertheless automatically assigned so such company can still be linked or associated to a product/service level in a corresponding hierarchy.

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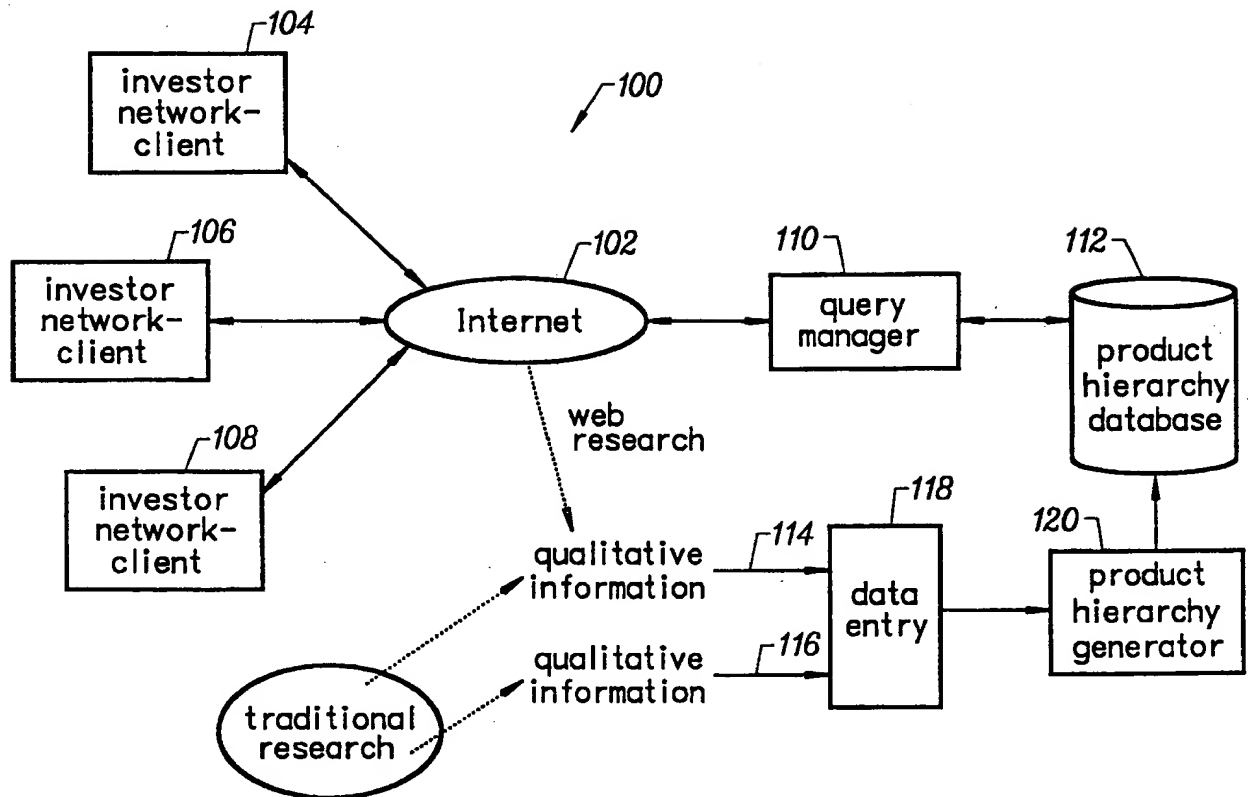


FIG. 1

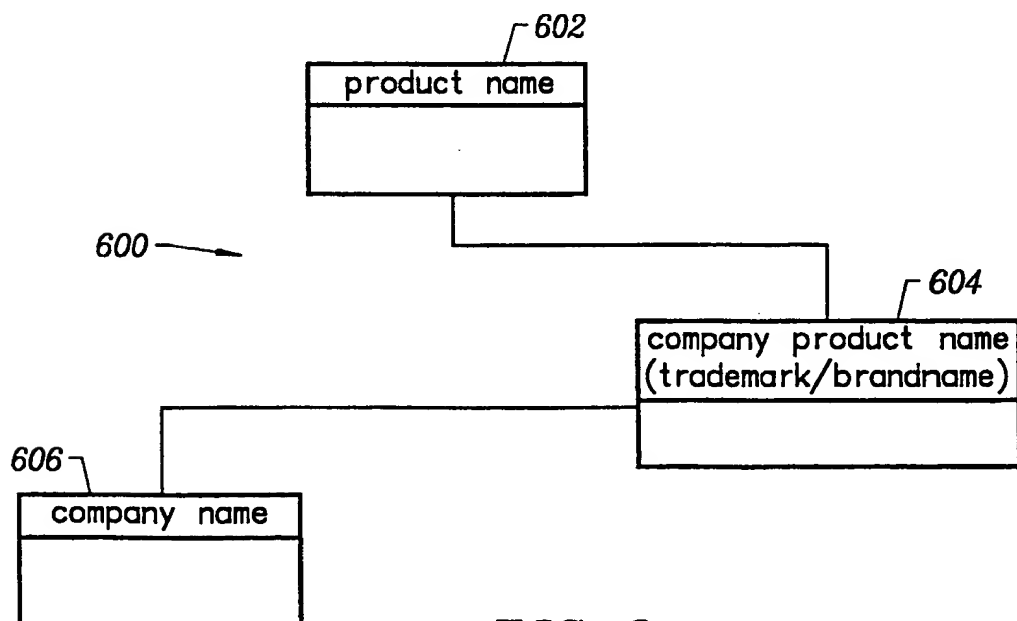
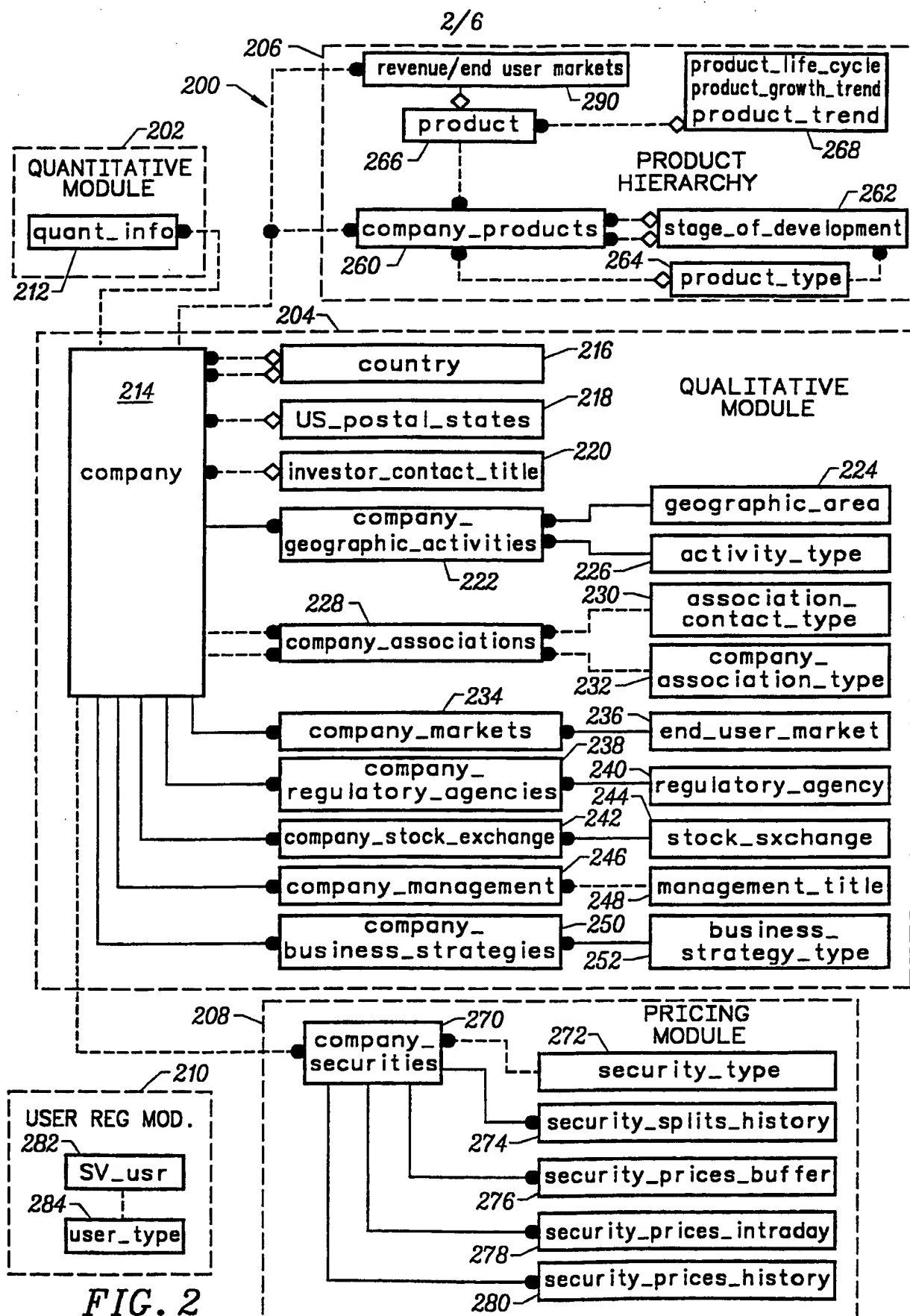


FIG. 6



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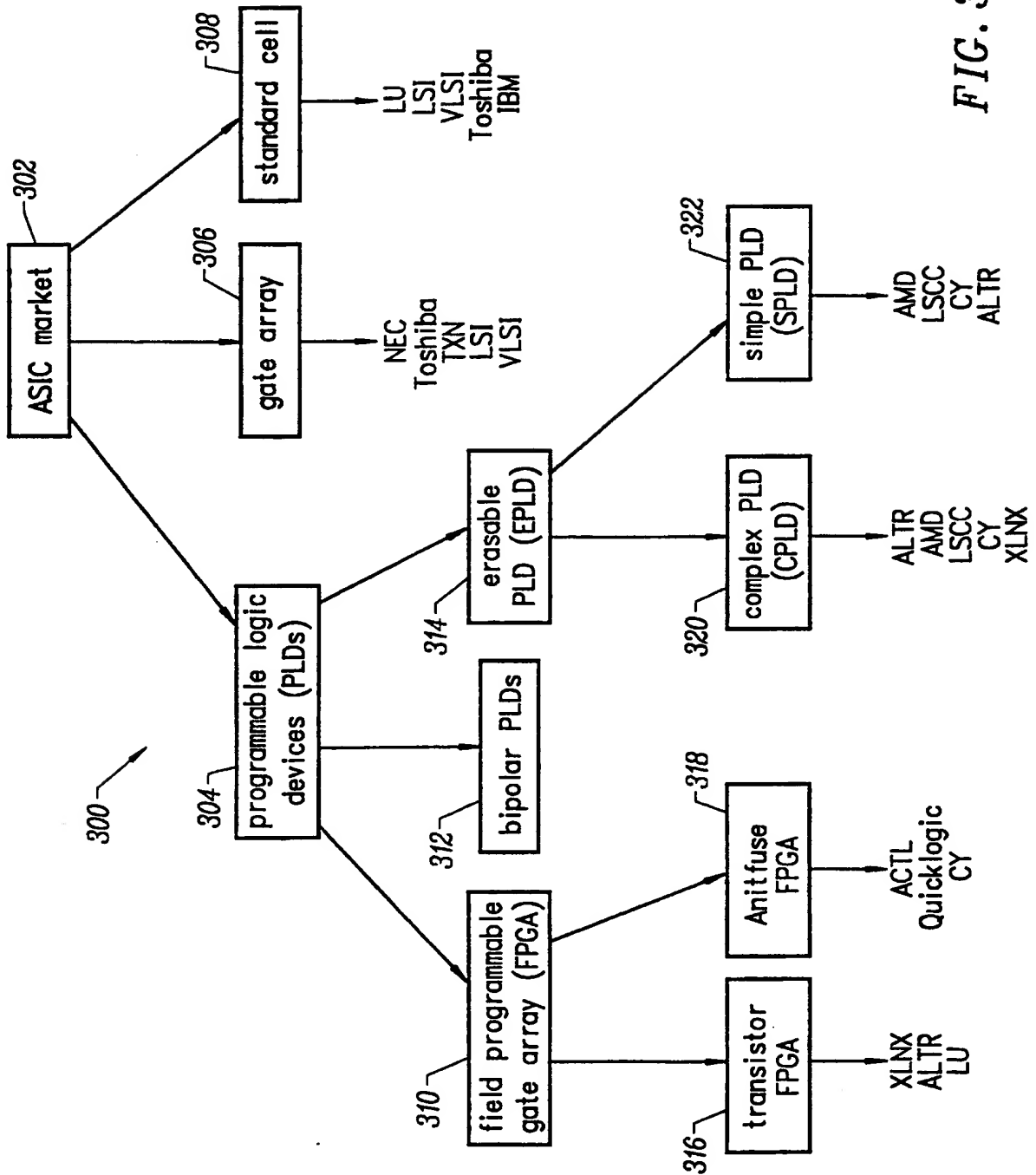


FIG. 3

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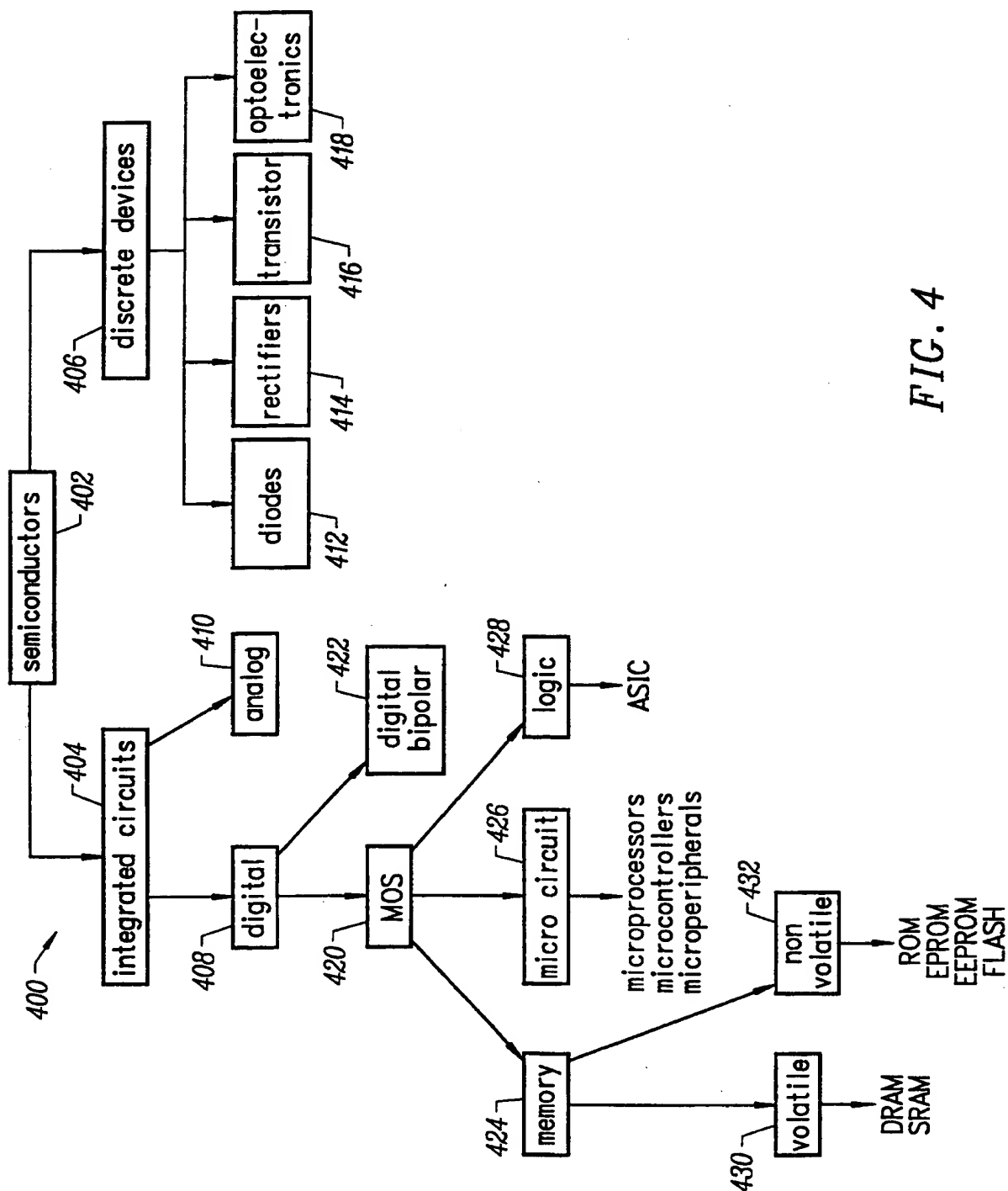


FIG. 4

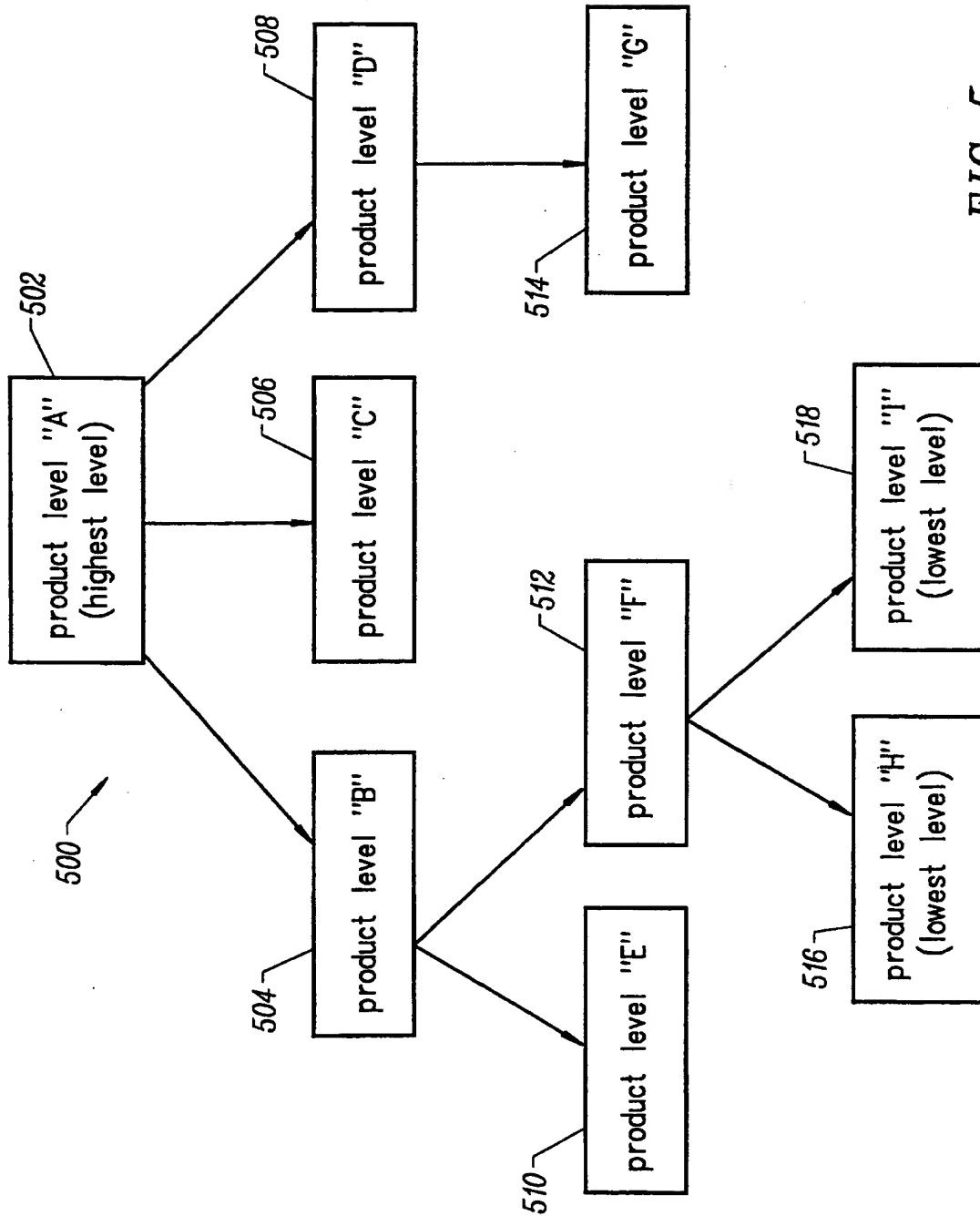


FIG. 5

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Introduction to Indices		Indices by Sector		Index Gainers		Index Decliners		Most Active Indices		Calculation Method	
Index Decliners											
Industry, Sector, Subsector	Symbol	Last	Daily Chg.	52Week		Today	Last 1 Month	Last 3 Months	Year to Date		
				High	Low	%Chg. Rank	%Chg. Rank	%Chg. Rank	%Chg. Rank		
INDUSTRIES											
STechnology	TECHN	189.58 ↓	-6.05	221.05	110.80	-3.09% 2	-9.56% 2	+1.83% 1	+5.59% 1		
SHealthcare	HCARE	96.81 ↓	-1.26	118.90	84.49	-1.28% 1	-3.41% 1	-0.76% 2	-11.69% 2		
SECTORS											
Internet/Online	WWWB	369.44 ↓	-26.83	584.36	164.29	-6.77% 17	-24.34% 17	-25.23% 17	+5.10% 9		
Software	SFTWR	184.42 ↓	-5.78	220.57	121.98	-3.04% 16	-13.04% 16	+2.42% 10	-8.44% 14		
Communications Equipment	COMM	164.41 ↓	-5.06	187.68	93.52	-2.99% 15	-5.17% 10	+11.83% 5	+16.34% 7		
Consumer Electronics	CENTX	105.01 ↓	-2.82	114.45	76.18	-2.61% 14	-5.09% 9	+3.62% 8	+5.39% 8		
Communications Services	COMSV	195.27 ↓	-4.98	221.77	104.25	-2.49% 13	-7.68% 15	-2.05% 13	+24.26% 5		
Semiconductor Capital Equipment	SEMCP	247.58 ↓	-5.69	275.63	106.56	-2.25% 12	-1.67% 4	+22.54% 3	+31.33% 4		
Medical Supplies	MDSUP	166.96 ↓	-3.49	205.53	166.60	-2.05% 11	-6.76% 12	-3.28% 14	-14.02% 15		
Medical Devices	MDDVI	117.42 ↓	-2.34	130.62	91.00	-1.95% 10	-4.00% 7	+2.25% 11	-1.60% 11		
Data Storage	DATA	162.45 ↓	-3.22	187.76	100.97	-1.97% 9	-7.19% 13	+7.66% 7	-4.62% 12		
Computer Hardware	HRDWR	136.29 ↓	-2.62	151.35	98.64	-1.89% 8	-5.08% 8	-0.35% 12	+0.20% 10		
Semiconductors	SEMIC	334.23 ↓	-6.38	366.14	129.98	-1.87% 7	-2.06% 5	+27.49% 2	+48.99% 1		
Technology Services	TKSRV	197.58 ↓	-3.46	286.86	185.85	-1.72% 6	-6.11% 11	-4.84% 15	-24.06% 16		
Outsourced Technology Mfg.	OTMFG	271.06 ↓	-4.05	299.49	129.04	-1.47% 5	-2.14% 6	+36.75% 1	+34.41% 2		
Scientific Products	SCIPR	263.45 ↓	-3.82	276.10	171.19	-1.43% 4	-0.48% 3	+11.16% 6	+17.79% 6		
Electronic Components	ELCMP	271.22 ↓	-3.50	286.86	145.18	-1.27% 3	+0.08% 1	+15.57% 4	+32.96% 3		
Healthcare Services	HSRVC	85.22 ↓	-1.03	130.92	86.25	-1.19% 2	-7.53% 14	-9.79% 16	-25.29% 17		
Biopharmaceuticals	BPHRM	96.35 ↓	-0.83	112.66	79.33	-0.86% 1	-0.24% 2	+2.84% 9	-8.06% 13		
SUBSECTORS											
Information	NFRMN	869.94 ↓	-66.68	1535.66	423.25	-7.12% 129	-28.61% 128	-28.87% 127	+4.36% 63		
Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C)	CNSUM	14072.41 ↓	-1030.39	25870.90	3310.24	-6.82% 128	-33.87% 129	-32.40% 129	+29.42% 23		
Business-to-Consumer (B2C)	BZCON	512.89 ↓	-36.26	888.52	238.26	-6.61% 127	-27.72% 127	-31.73% 128	-10.98% 111		
Services	SRVCN	433.74 ↓	-29.97	656.71	174.11	-6.46% 126	-23.41% 126	-21.30% 126	-10.98% 111		
Business E-Commerce (B2B)	BTOBC	614.99 ↓	-41.70	930.14	225.39	-6.35% 125	-21.90% 125	-20.33% 125	-8.06% 13		

FIG. 7

FIG. 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US 99/19194

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 G06F17/60

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 G06F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X A	WO 96 18963 A (FS HOLDINGS INC) 20 June 1996 (1996-06-20) page 5, line 4 -page 7, line 11 page 13, line 2 -page 14, line 30	1, 18 2-17, 19-22
A	US 5 502 637 A (BEAULIEU ROLAND C ET AL) 26 March 1996 (1996-03-26) column 2, line 65 -column 3, line 57	1-22
P, A	US 5 806 049 A (PETRUZZI CHRISTOPHER R) 8 September 1998 (1998-09-08) page 1, line 49 -page 2, line 28	1-22
P, A	US 5 802 518 A (KITAIN EDUARD ET AL) 1 September 1998 (1998-09-01) column 5, line 30 -column 7, line 64	1-22

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

21 December 1999

Date of mailing of the international search report

11/01/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA

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Authorized officer

Bowler, A

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Int. Application No

PCT/US 99/19194

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